

BIKE

BIKE Magazine for cycling and travel

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FEBRUARY 2025

FROM
EUROPE
TO ASIA

BIKEPACKING
GRANADA
SPAIN

GRINDURO
SCOTLAND
2025

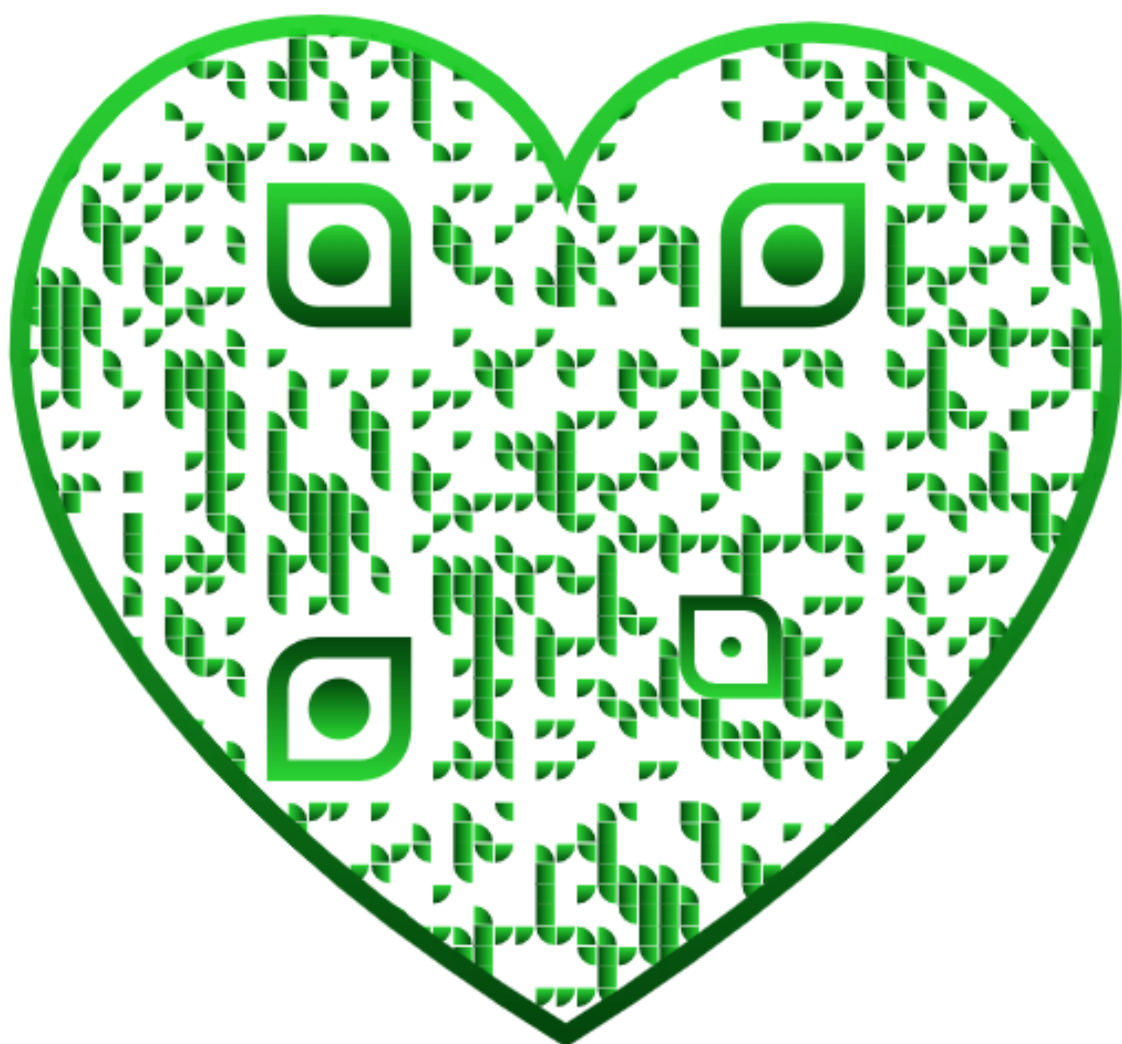
PASHLEY
ROADFINDER

RETURN OF
SELLESAN
MARCO

BLOODWISE
CHARITY
CYCLE TO
PARIS

THE
PERFECT
FIT WITH
IDMATCH

MONTBLANC
& LAKE
DISTRICT



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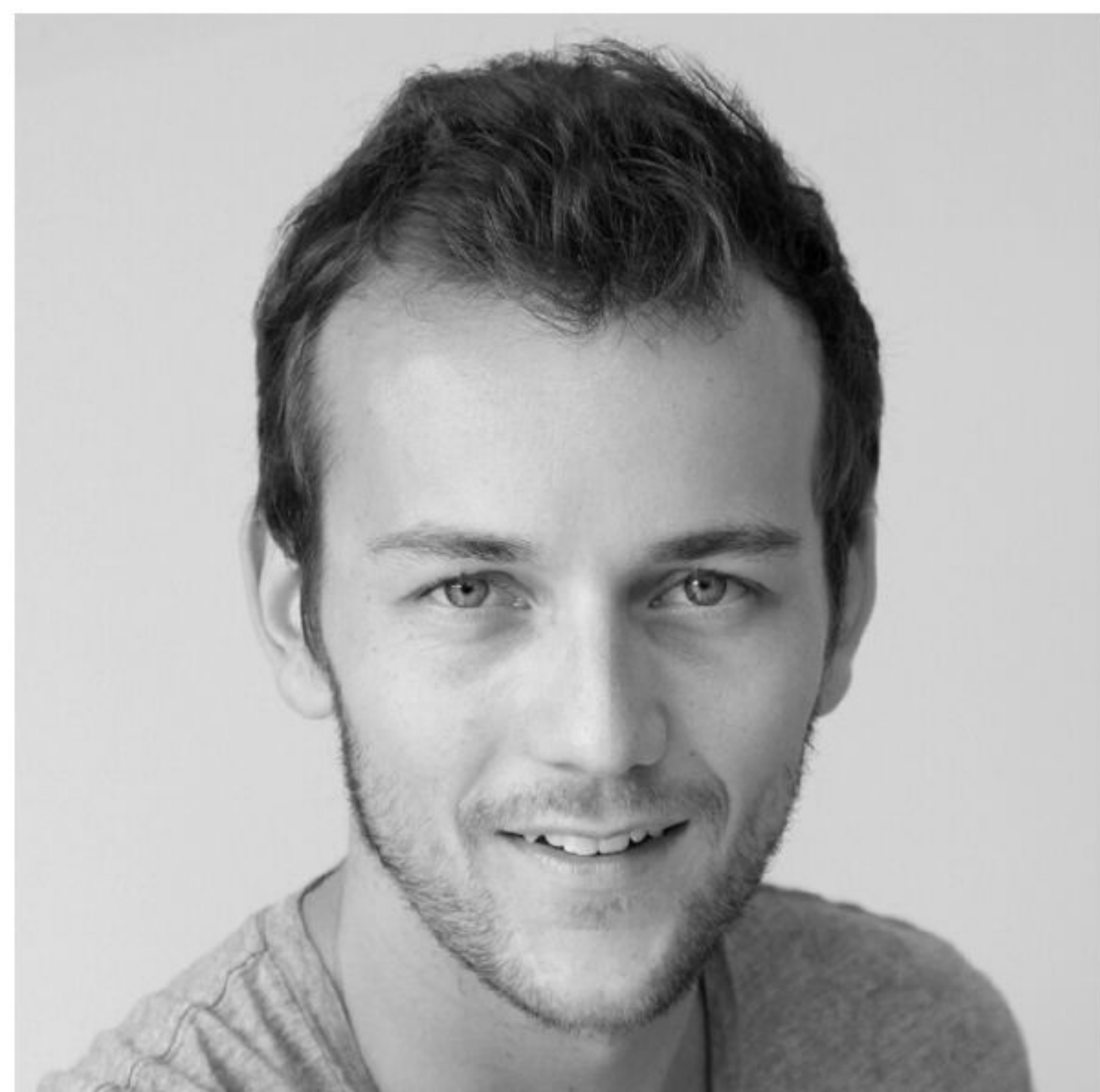
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WELCOME

Nick Branxton
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Welcome to the February 2025 issue of BIKE Magazine. This month we are exploring various cycling destinations, new gear, and industry updates.

This issue features a detailed exploration of Winchester, a historic city in Hampshire, surrounded by excellent cycling routes. It serves as the gateway to the South Downs, offering a mix of scenic countryside rides, historic landmarks, and access to the South Downs Way, a popular 100-mile off-road trail. Cyclists can also venture into the New Forest, enjoy coastal routes, or join guided cycling tours.

The Flandrien Hotel - cyclist-centric accommodation in Flanders, Belgium, designed by an Australian ex-racer. With a seamless check-in process, secure bike storage, a service course for maintenance, and guided routes to iconic Tour of Flanders climbs, the hotel provides an immersive experience. Guests can also explore a cycling-themed bar, museum, and art gallery.

Galfer, a renowned brake component manufacturer, announces its partnership with the Lotto Cycling Team for the 2025 season. This collaboration enhances performance by integrating high-quality braking technology into professional races like the Tour de France and La Vuelta España.

Lake District - a picturesque cycling route through the

famous area, retracing part of the Tour of Britain. From Morecambe Bay to Keswick, the ride includes challenging climbs, stunning lake views, and recommended accommodations such as The Cottage in the Wood.

Pashley Cycles introduces the Roadfinder Collection, a versatile range designed for endurance road riding, off-road gravel, and bike-packing. Handcrafted in the UK with high-quality Reynolds steel and advanced design elements, the Roadfinder is available in both standard and electric versions.

From Europe to Asia is a cyclist's journey across continents on a Genesis Tour de Fer bike. The author explores the bike's steel frame, durability, and long-distance comfort.

Cycling Tour in Granada is a feature story recounts a cycling adventure through the Andalucían countryside, starting in Granada. The journey involves scenic climbs, historic villages, and breathtaking descents through the Sierra Nevada and Axarquía mountains, capturing Spain's cultural essence.

The Bloodwise is a multi-day charity ride covering 500 km from London to Paris. The event offers a pro-like experience with support vehicles, rolling road closures, and high spirits despite challenging weather and terrain.

You will also find in-depth travel guides, gear reviews, and industry updates. Happy cycling!

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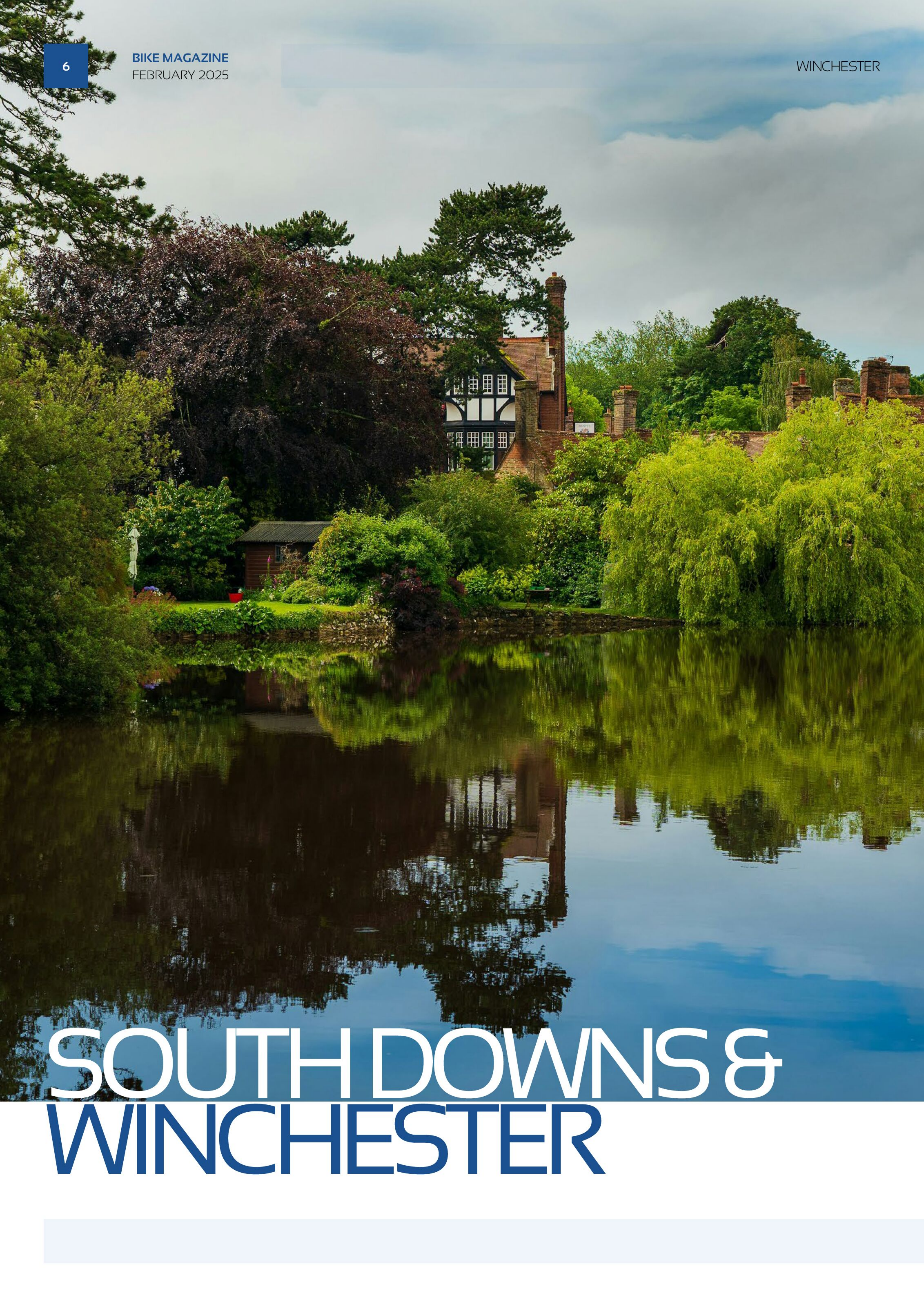
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BIKE



SOUTH DOWNS & WINCHESTER



We head to Winchester, a city not only steeped in centuries of interesting history but also with an abundance of opportunities to hop aboard the bicycle

This month we head to Winchester, a city not only steeped in centuries of interesting history but also with an abundance of opportunities to hop aboard the bicycle

1 Situated on the western edge of the South Downs, it's the perfect vantage point from which to conduct sorties into the wilderness. Find a suitable little coffee shop (of which there are many) and plot a route into the Downs.

2 For cycle tourers, the city is steeped wall-to-wall in history - and even some of the walls are Roman. Take time out to visit the cathedral and the Great Hall, home of King Arthur's legendary round table.

3 So, you do like to be beside the seaside? Well, that's handy. Winchester is a mere 15-mile pedal to the coast. Fish and chips on the beach? With one of those dodgy impractical wooden forks? Pas de problem!

4 For those who prefer a clattering rear mech and coming away from a ride covered in filth, your luck is most certainly in. For the city hosts the starting- (or finishing-) point of the South Downs Way - one of the great British off-road trips, spanning the 100-mile width of the Downs from Winchester to Eastbourne.

5 The New Forest is just down the road. Winchester is certainly proving to be the epicentre of all things cycling, and this National Park, which includes bountiful swathes of heath and pasture land, somewhat bolsters the notion.

6 Family outing? Bespoke Biking of Winchester hire out bikes and conduct cycle tour trips around the city and beyond. Avoid widowing your loved ones to two-wheels and involve the whole brood.

7 Encompassed by greenery it's hard to believe Winchester is just over an hour away from London - but it is. Sling your bike on the train and enjoy the journey down to England's erstwhile capital city.

Hampshire - unassuming home to some of the best bucolic jaunts on a bicycle the UK has to offer. Including the South Downs and New Forest National Parks (which together cover 45 per cent of the county), and bordered to the south by the English Channel, you are rarely without spectacular views in Hants.

We leave Winchester, the county town, and pedal due east with a view to getting as involved with the South Downs as our legs will allow. Yes, the option of a comparatively sedate ride through the flatlands of the New Forest wasn't without its allure, but after





double-helpings at breakfast it is mused that the occasional climb should be negotiated today, lest we fail to burn off those extra rashers of bacon.

Out of the inner-city maelstrom, which, for a town so inundated with tourism, is fairly simple work, the road is presently thick with greenery on this late summer morning, and a brisk tack towards Morestead begins. With eventual designs of a Meon Valley traversal today, it might be pragmatic to leave something in the legs for the hillier stretches - but, for now, the 360 degree sweeping vistas alone are reason enough to be riding a bicycle... blissful!

Upon reaching Corhampton and the furthest easterly point of the route, we begin our meander, on lengths of tarmac delightfully free of traffic, along the Meon Valley. Fully immersed in the Downs now and totally appreciative of the rural arena in which we are enveloped, the climbing starts in earnest, and although the road up to Woodlands is never what you'd consider a real challenge, it certainly serves to remind the thighs what they're here for.

Now heading north-west, we note that Arlesford appears a likely place to stop for a spot of carb-loading. This little town is the blueprint of the picture-perfect British backwater settlement. The high street is

laced with a string of charismatic shops and cottages, and a number of eateries and pubs which, in keeping with town's oldworld charm, brag grade two listing. Opting for a sandwich amid the unrivalled ambiance at the Horse and Groom, Arlesford is departed feeling suitably replenished and the big push back to Winchester along the gently undulating B3047 begins.

Once back in town, with a solid 30-miles of riding in the bag, it would almost be inexcusable not to repair immediately to the nearest hostelry to blow the froth from a frosty glass of beer or two, and bask both in a good day's work and the history of this quaint city in the heart of Hampshire.

FLANDRIEN HOTEL

**FLANDRIEN
HOTEL**




The **Flandrien Hotel** is located in the heart of the region of the Tour of Flanders and is 100% geared towards serving cycling tourists. As a competitive cyclist, the Hotel's Australian founder Jamie Anderson was frequently astounded by the woeful experience of staying at hotels on his international cycling trips.

He became so frustrated that he started to dream about what a true cyclists' lodging might look like – and then he created one! The Flandrien Hotel has endeavoured to make the arrival process as seamless as possible, starting with airport transfers for guests and bicycles. There is a Service Course where guests can unpack and assemble their bikes, and the hotel provides storage for both boxes and bikes in secure storage rooms.

The check-in process is largely automated, with guests having the ability to check-in online 48 hours before arrival. So when they arrive at the hotel there is no lining up at the reception desk – because there is no reception desk.

Guests are checked in with a few clicks on an iPad in the Clubhouse bar and can typically be out on their bikes within less than 45-minutes. And what if you have a mechanical out on the road? No problem, the hotel offers an SOS pickup and complementary bike replacement service.

The hotel has an amazing location smack in the middle of the route of the Tour of Flanders and is in easy reach of iconic climbs such as Oude Kwaremont, De Muur, Berendries and Bosberg. GPS routes of the area can be directly downloaded from the hotel's website.

In addition to offering accommodation that is tailored to the needs of cyclists, the Flandrien also features an impressive Clubhouse bar with a wide selection of Belgian beers. There is also a Classic Bicycle museum and Art Gallery that exhibits artworks by Belgian cycling photographers, painters and sculptors.

The Flandrien has a fleet of more than 50 rental bicycles that are set-up to take on the rigours of the cobbles and bergs of the region. And the hotel even has a 1979 Peugeot-Michelin Team Car to shuttle its guests to local restaurants. The whole experience at the Flandrien Hotel aims to inspire guests, give them pace of mind, and to immerse them in the cycling history and heritage of Flanders.

For more information go to
www.flandrienhotel.com
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GALFER PARTNERS WITH LOTTO CYCLING TEAM FOR 2025



Galfer, a leading manufacturer of high-performance brake components, is thrilled to announce its new partnership as the official sponsor and exclusive brake component supplier for the Lotto Cycling Team in the 2025 season. Through its close collaboration with Orbea, a premier bicycle manufacturer, the team will compete in prestigious international races, including the Tour de France and La Vuelta España.

A Milestone for Galfer in Road Cycling

This agreement marks a major step for Galfer in the road cycling sector. Following its successful involvement in La Vuelta España 2023 with the Caja Rural-Seguros RGA team, Galfer now equips all Lotto Cycling Team bikes, reinforcing its presence in top-tier global competitions. The team will utilize Galfer's cutting-edge Disc Wave® Road brake discs (ø140mm, 76g, center-lock model) and Pro G1554T brake pads, known

for their instant high performance without a break-in period. These ultra-lightweight, high-performance braking systems offer superior control and reliability, making them ideal for elite competition. Additionally, the Lotto Cycling Team will serve as a crucial testing platform for Galfer's new center-lock disc prototypes currently in development.

Strategic Collaboration with Orbea

Orbea has played a key role in facilitating this partnership, reflecting a shared commitment to innovation and excellence at the highest level of professional cycling. The team's flagship models, the Orca Aero and the Orca, are equipped with Galfer braking systems, ensuring optimal braking power and control. This collaboration results in a highly efficient system, with Galfer's technology enhancing performance and reliability across all races.

A Strong Lineup for 2025

The Lotto Cycling Team features a robust sports structure, comprising three teams. The professional squad includes 25 elite riders, among them Belgian national champion Arnaud De Lie, Lennert Van Eetvelt, Jasper De Buyst, and veteran Eduardo Sepúlveda. These athletes will compete in world-class events, including the Tour de France, La Vuelta España, and the Spring Classics. Additionally, both the Lotto Ladies Team and the Lotto Development Team will use Galfer braking systems on their Orbea bikes, ensuring top-tier performance across all categories.

Galfer's Commitment to Innovation and Excellence

Through this partnership, Galfer reaffirms its dedication to advancing braking technology and maintaining its leadership in high-performance cycling components. By collaborating with Orbea and the Lotto Cycling Team, Galfer is set to push the boundaries of innovation, supporting world-class athletes in their pursuit of victory on the global stage.



A full-page photograph of a scenic landscape in the Lake District. In the foreground, two cyclists are riding away from the viewer on a dirt path that winds through a lush green field. The cyclist in front is wearing a blue jacket and a backpack, while the second cyclist is wearing a green jacket and a backpack. The path leads towards a dense forest of tall, slender pine trees. In the background, a calm lake is visible, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic, capturing a moment of outdoor recreation in a beautiful natural setting.

LAKE DISTRICT

How to handle the Tour of Britain (with stops for brew and touring)

Proceeding with our arrangement on handling the course of the Tour of Britain - at an all the more restful pace - Simon Parker offers a manual for the precarious inclines of the Lake District.

The adventure

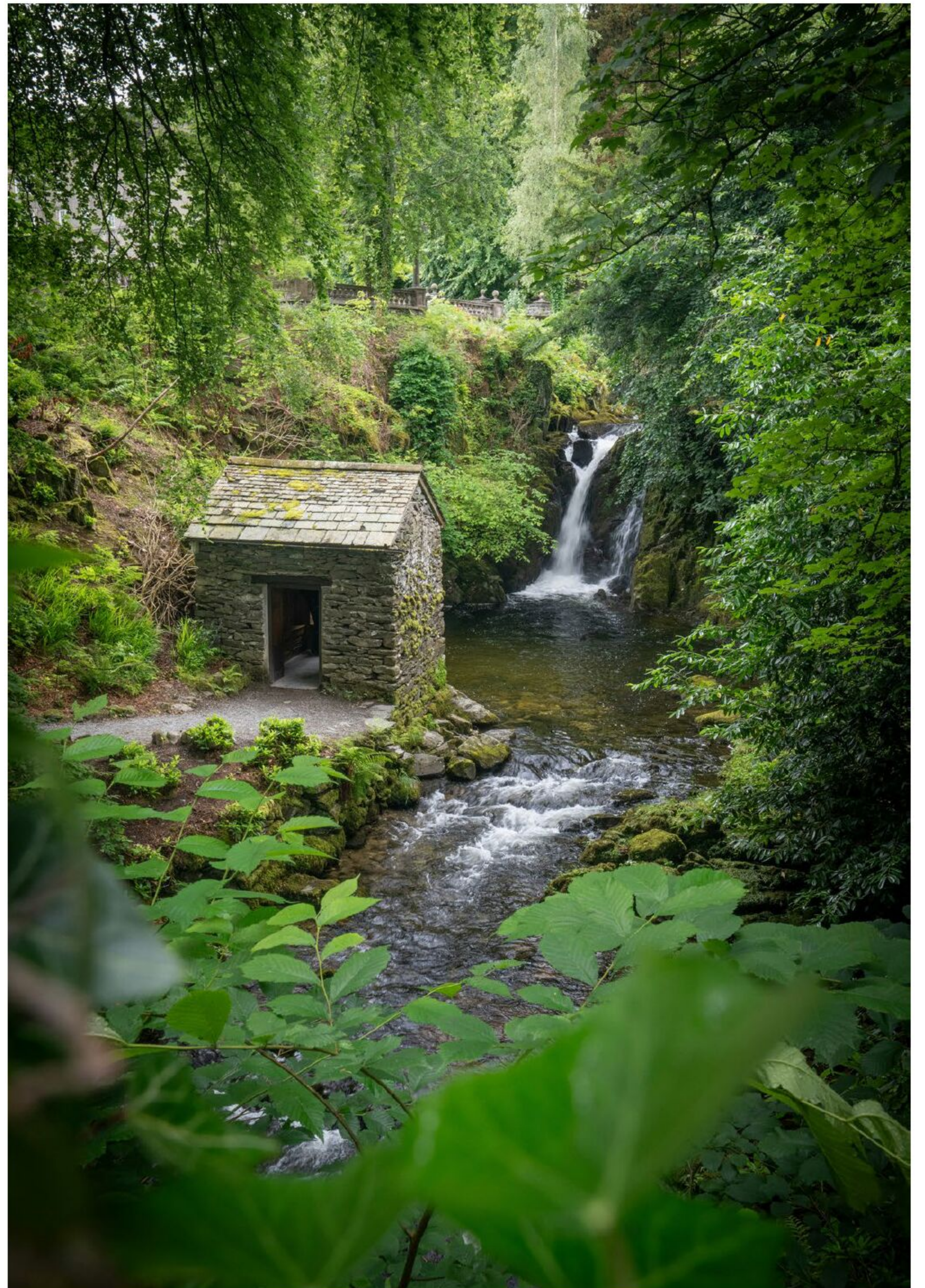
This is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the most ostensibly astonishing of all the visit's stages this year, starting in Furness, adjoining Morecambe Sound and, 105 miles later on,

the edges of Keswick at Whinlatter Pass. The race is depended upon to last barely short of four hours. Nonetheless, most learners should allow double the time -- there's too much scene worth stopping to appreciate.

The best stop

Keeping the messy stack of Morecambe Bay on your right shoulder, you'll wind north towards the neighborhood of Ulverston, before the course scrambles toward the lakes by methods for undulating farmland on every horizon. An irritating summer heatwave couldn't dry this rich, clearing scene - and you'll wind up cycling adjoining soaked, lichen-settled slopes and lazy feeding pens, mistook for dry stone dividers. In case you've anytime done "thumps and dashes" at a flipping around class then this region is the veritable frame - a substantial bit of a mile up, an expansive segment of a mile down.

You'll take after the A593 that runs neighboring the five mile long, a vast part of a mile wide, Conistone Water - the District Lake's third greatest lake, before accomplishing the town of Conistone at the northern tip, where you'll find



a bank, a little broad store and a couple of bistros. Starting there, the course brushes the north side of Windermere, before moving to in excess of 600 feet at Dunmail Raise, just south of Thirlmere. North of Ambleside there's a remarkable cycle way that will save you the issue of cycling on the A591 twofold carriageway, taking you on the west side of Thirlmere, neighboring congested banks and rising above pine trees looking like bigger than common Christmas trees. Finally the course slides into Keswick where you can either whole a further 40-mile hover to Cockermouth and Workington, or (like me) save it to the next morning when your legs quit.

Rest and refuel

Convent House Hotel (01229 838282; abbeyhousehotel.com) is only a mile from the focal point of Barrow-in-Furness and the suites are gigantic, with baths and showers, couches and chimneys. The eatery, Oscar's, has healthy plates of mixed greens, nearby frankfurters and steaks. Breakfast is served from 0645am, which is ideal for a solid start, and there are Manx kippers from the Isle of Man, right over the Irish Sea. Duplicates from £70.

Around five miles from the finish of the race, west of Keswick, The Cottage in the Wood (01768 778409; thecottageinthewood.co.uk) is a brilliantly comfortable spot and situated appropriately next to the course. The nourishment is excellent and has progressed toward becoming something of a nearby foodie journey as



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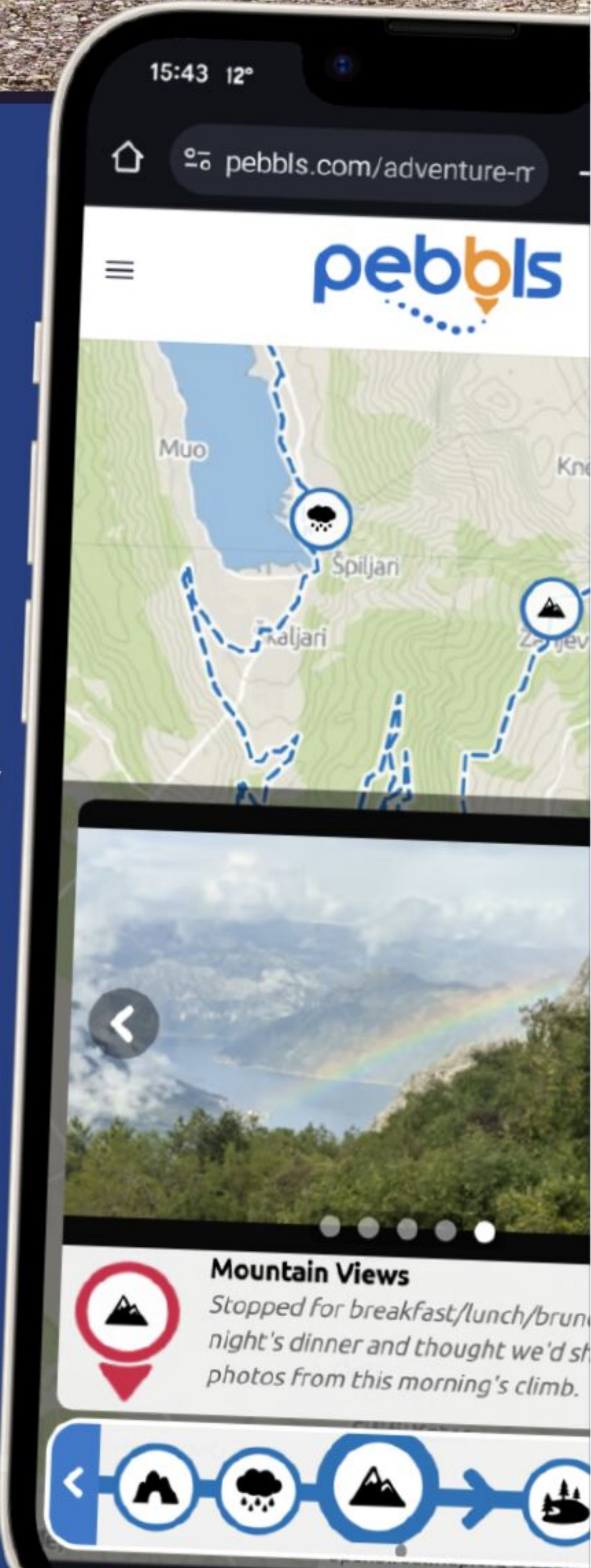
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of late. There's Morecambe Bay crab, privately raised pork emblems and scrounged woods nourishments where conceivable. The fried eggs with smoked bacon and chanterelle mushrooms are scrumptious. Duplicates from £130.

Backup ways to go

On the off chance that you're getting the plane from Lancaster then you should need to get off at Ulverston and join the course there, instead of taking care of

business to Wheelbarrel in-Furness. This will shave off the flattish 11-mile segment toward the start of the stage that skirts Morecambe Bay.

How to arrive?

By means of set up this is decidedly a pinch of schlep from most corners of the UK, yet it's legitimized, in spite of all the inconvenience. A limited toll from London to Cart in-Furness changes some place in the scope of £47 and £109 and it takes

around 3 hours and 45 minutes. There's no get ready station in Keswick, so you'll need to either ride a further 17 miles to Penrith or take a taxi. Confirmations from Penrith to London start at £44.

Rundown

Spectacularly awesome distance - this stage displays the most sweeping sees and minimum people. In case I could ride one stage over and over, it would be this one.

Britain's best ride

With the Lake District not only being home to the iconic Lake Poets, Beatrix Potter and John Ruskin, but also England's rarest wildlife; deepest and largest lakes; tallest woodland and the highest mountain Scafell Pike (978m), it's no wonder the stunning county of Cumbria is such a popular holiday destination, attracting around 15.8 million visitors per year.

The Lake District is the go-to place for anyone who enjoys adventure and fascinating history, with the South of the Lake District being one of the most attractive areas within the region. Nonetheless, tourists typically find themselves not having enough time to tick everything off their bucket lists – there's just too much to do and not enough hours in the day (let alone walking energy!). So, why not cover all distances and add some adrenaline to your journey





by hiring a bike before you find yourself stuck back in the office and thinking 'I wonder what... was like?'

Luckily, more and more cycling routes have been created throughout the county, making cyclists journeys easier and more enjoyable as a whole. Whether you're looking to explore Morecambe Bay with its spider web of local quiet lanes, or the stunning lakes of Conistone Water and Windermere Lake, all are home to Britain's best cycling routes and idyllic scenery.

With the South of the Lake District having various high-end Trek and Enigma Titanium road bikes on hire via the company Lake District Bikes, all of which have been selected for your enjoyment, specially geared and perfectly designed for what the region has to offer, there's simply no excuse not to jump on the saddle and partake in a trip of a lifetime.

Nonetheless, if you are slacking when it comes to personal fitness or feel like your fellow friend or family member who you're going away with needs a little assistance, don't fear! Lake District Bikes can supply you with E-Bikes for as little as £36, helping to cycle longer and faster while still reaping the benefits of riding a bike. They are also great vehicles for those with aches and pains whom don't want to miss out on the adventure, especially those a little older in age (told you there's not excuse!).

Whatever your cycling needs, the bike company will happily help you find a bike individually catered not only to your fitness level but also your personal desire. Better still, they can arrange for your bikes to be delivered to your accommodation; supply you with information about group rides if you're looking to meet new people with common ground; give you in-depth knowledge on the

area to make sure you don't get lost and the most out of your vacation; offer you bike tours so you're sure to visit the most stunning areas; ensure you have on route repairs should you have a puncture (any parts/inner tubes used will be charged for), and can take holiday bookings consisting of the finest holiday lodges, which are more than accommodating for if you need somewhere comfortable and sophisticated to rest your bones – you can also bring your own bike!

Be sure to book your bike and/or holiday in advance to avoid disappointment and enjoy a stress-free ride and break at a reasonable price – www.lakedistrictbikes.com



Lake District Bikes

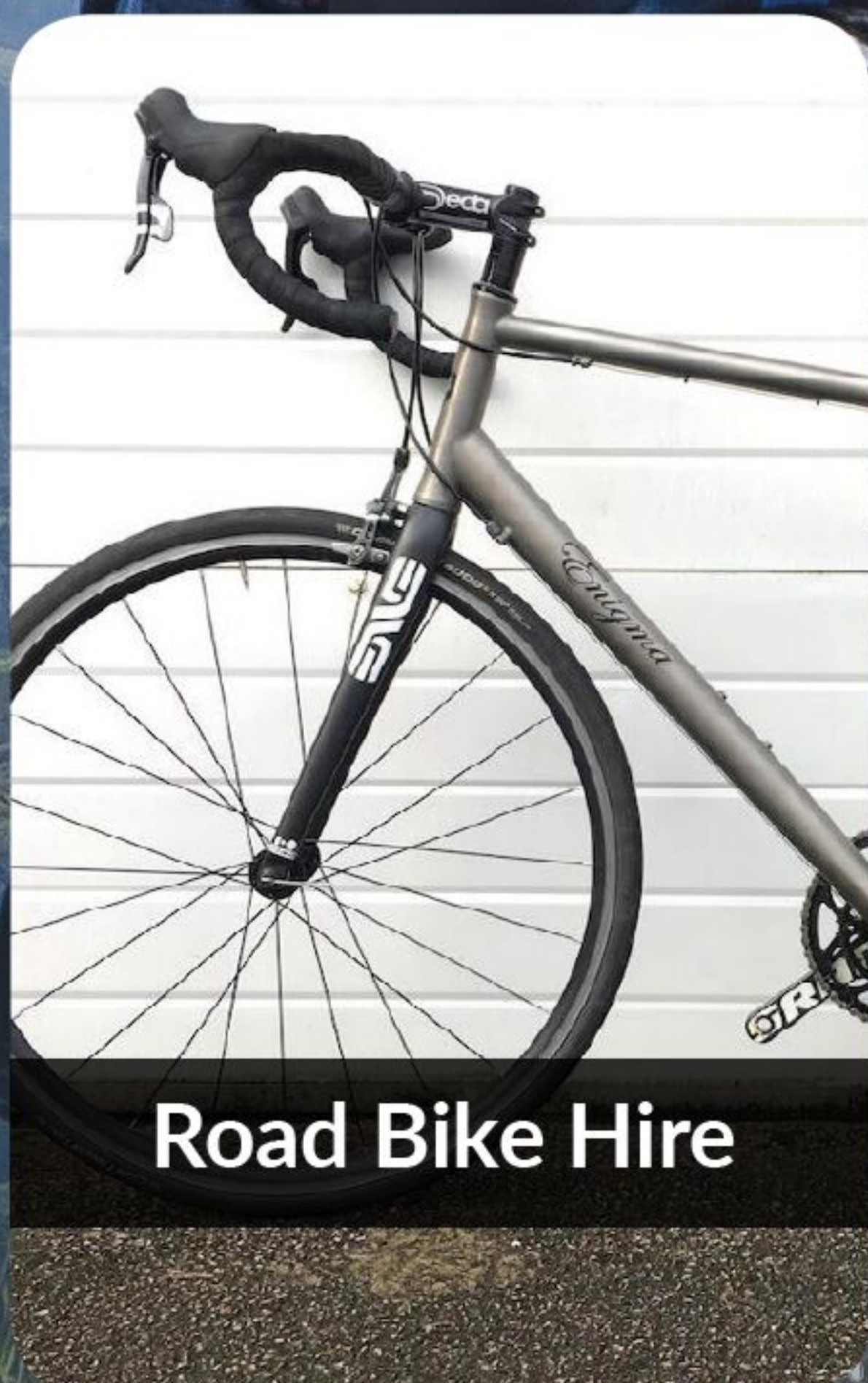
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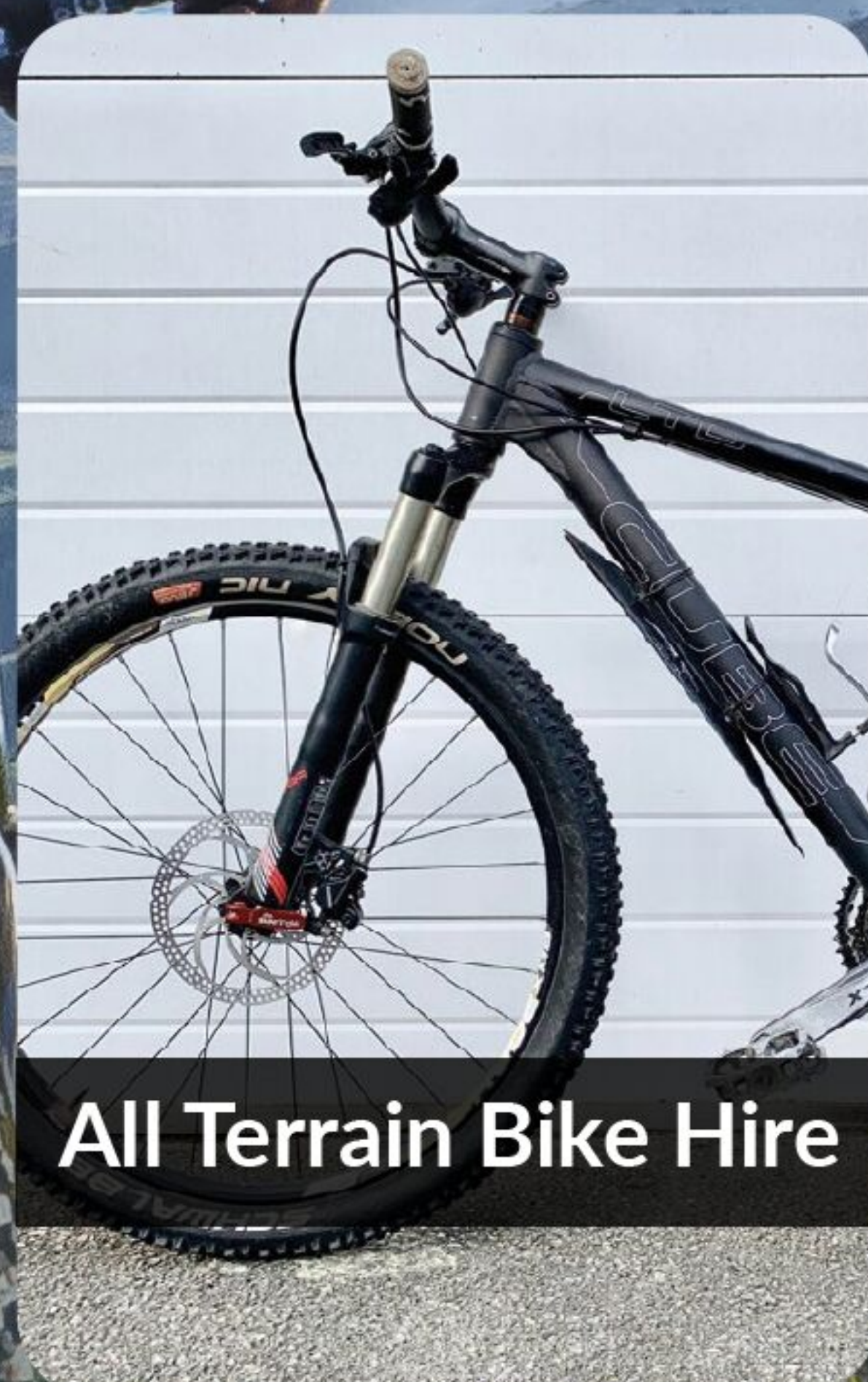
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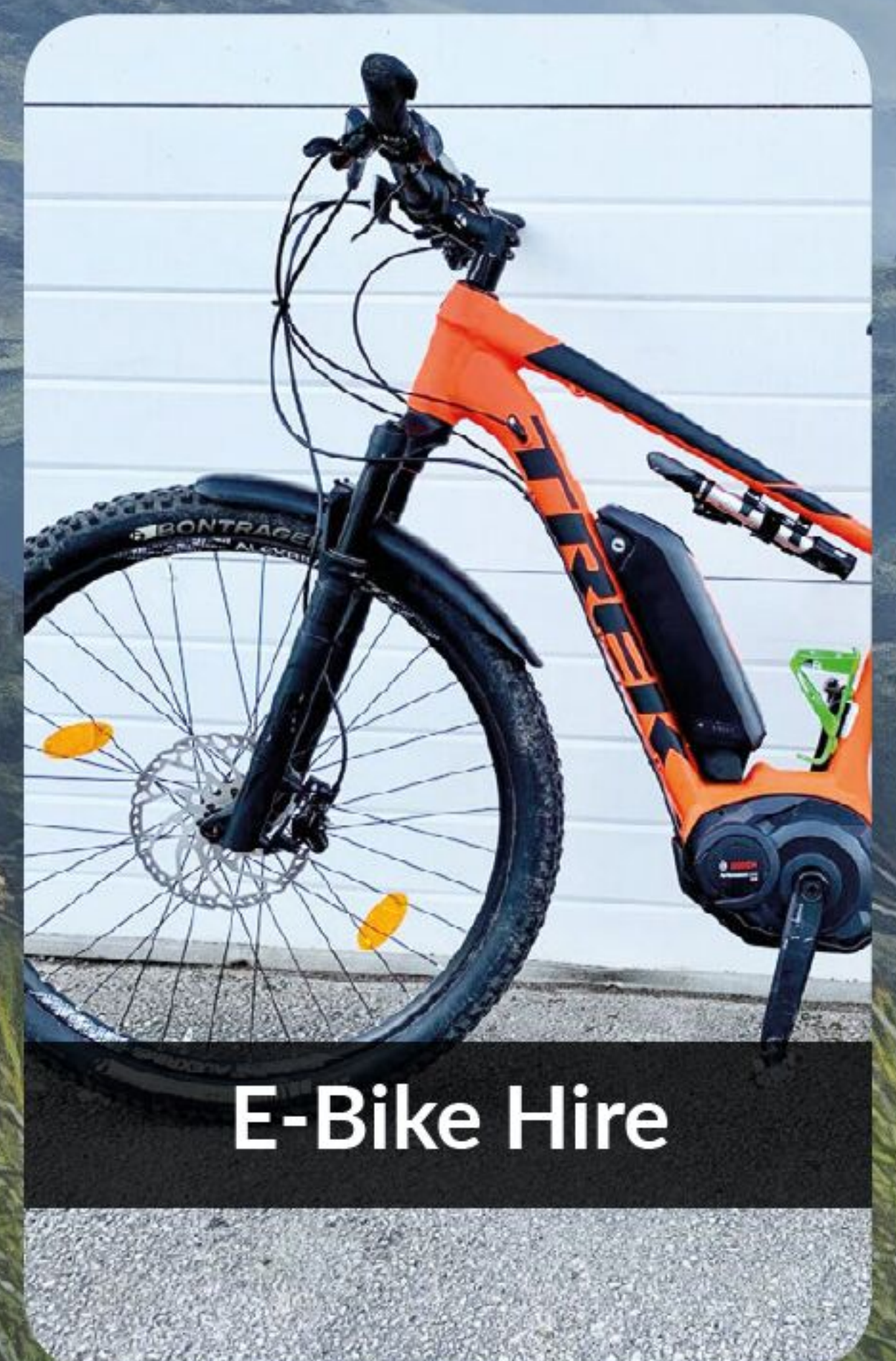
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PASHLEY ROADFINDER



Pashley launches the all-new Pashley Roadfinder - The new timeless all-rounder

Pashley Cycles proudly unveils their all-new Roadfinder Collection. A high-quality, performance focussed, exquisitely hand-crafted, super versatile bicycle that allows the rider to choose between road, off-road and any combination in-between – all from one frame platform. The Collection includes the Roadfinder, Roadfinder E, Roadfinder X and the Roadfinder X E models.

The Pashley Roadfinder Collection consists of frame designs for both conventional and electric models with road and gravel specific builds. Designed, developed, tested and handmade in their UK based factory in Stratford-upon-Avon the brand seamlessly blurs modern technologies, innovation and great British craftsmanship

with the introduction of 3D printed and laser cut elements at structurally integral junctures. Pashley's ingenuity intelligently showcases a masterful and unique design that beautifully amplifies the luxurious ride feel that a high-quality hand-crafted steel frame can offer.

"The brief for the Roadfinder project was to develop a collection of extremely versatile bicycles that give cyclists the ability to conquer multiple terrains, journeys and adventures on one beautifully hand-crafted machine. From all-season endurance road rides, off-road gravel trails to bike-packing exploration, this is the 'Swiss Army Knife of Bicycles'.

'The Roadfinder collection also perfectly showcases and builds on our heritage of artisan frame-building, appealing to all riders who appreciate true versatility, performance and the unique ride experience you only get from a high-end steel frame, built by hand using the very best materials". Andy Smallwood, CEO, Pashley

As the brand rides towards its 100-year centenary it is keen to herald its longstanding bike manufacturing and industry heritage, its master craftsmanship and artisan legacy whilst spotlighting its dynamic evolutionary design and exciting future. Attention to detail is exemplary. Design details include a new Pashley signature frame signifier which honours frame makers traditions from the past where their unique identifiers with bespoke profiling instantly identified the maker. Pashley's new 3D printed seat tube and top tube junction pays homage to this tradition. Other refined details include the proud Pashley 'P' on the rear dropout, wrap around metallic graphics and exquisite aluminium head badge. The result is stunning. A fully integrated lightweight frame platform with internal cable routing, sleek profiling, seamless welds and striking sophisticated design.

Versatility is also key. The new Roadfinder Collection boasts clearance for multiple tyre options up to 45c alongside mudguard fixing points, front, rear & frame luggage capacity, and multiple bottle mounts that allows the rider flexibility to create their ideal bicycle. Pashley offers 3 standard spec variations and 3 resplendent colourways per model - in Azure Blue, Rich Burgundy, Oak Green. With further options available for a classic finishing kit and colour matched mudguards.

The frames in more detail: The Roadfinder and Roadfinder X frame uses full Reynolds 853 tubing with full e-coating corrosion protection prior to painting. The frames utilise unique 3D printed seat tube/top tube junctions, UDH compatible dropouts with internal cable routing, removable front mech hanger and internal cable routing guides. The machined 44mm head-tube leads into the Columbus

Futura Cross+ carbon fork with flip chip drop-out.

The Roadfinder E and Roadfinder X E frame uses a combination of Reynolds 725, 631 & 525 tubing with a full e-coating corrosion protection applied prior to painting. 3D printed elements include: the signature seat-tube/top tube junction, removeable front mech hanger, internal cable routing guides and the Mahle activation controller housing and charge point. The frame also features a machine tapered head-tube allowing for a full carbon e-bike compliant Road/Gravel fork with tapered steerer with laser cut Mahle X20 compatible dropouts to complete the look.





"The design process for the new Roadfinder platform allowed us to look at combining a more endurance focussed geometry whilst maintaining a performance edge. We've introduced 3D printed elements to the frame to enhance the overall ride experience and to amplify the clean lines." Jon Cumberpatch, Lead Designer, Pashley

The Roadfinder models in more detail: The Pashley Roadfinder is a versatile Road focused bicycle aimed at everything from endurance road riding, group rides, commuting, touring, audax and more... Featuring Shimano mechanical and Di2 groupset options, Parours Alta carbon wheels and Zipp/Brooks finishing kit. Standard specification complete bike weights from 9.5kg.

The Pashley Roadfinder E is the electric version of the Roadfinder with the high performance Mahle X20 electric drive system at its heart. Standard specification complete bike weights from 13.2kg.

The Pashley Roadfinder X is a Gravel and off-road capable bicycle with specifications aimed at everything from mixed terrain riding, general gravel, gravel racing, off-road adventures bike packing and beyond... Featuring Shimano, SRAM and Campagnolo Groupset options, Parours Alta carbon wheels and Zipp/Brooks finishing kit alongside dropper post compatible with internal cable routing. Standard specification complete bike weights from 9.8kg.

The Pashley Roadfinder X E is the Electric version of the Roadfinder X with the high performance Mahle X20 electric drive system. Standard specification complete bike weights from 13.5kg.

All Pashley Roadfinders are meticulously wet painted to the highest standards with stencilled and painted graphics to give a luxurious finish.

The Pashley Roadfinder Collection starts at £2,795

FROM EUROPE TO ASIA

← ROSIE



After weeks of eye scratching internet research, we thought we had found the bike that was going to take us all the way to Asia

So, we bought bus tickets and travelled 500 kms to a specialised retailer in France, took them for a test drive and realised that we actually hated them.

Luckily Guillaume, the friendliest man ever and a touring bike know-it-all, had a couple of Genesis in stock... and it was love at first sight! Why? Well, let's see...

Although we are bike travelers, we are also humans, and the first thing that makes you fall in love is undoubtedly looks. Genesis Bikes knows this way too well and has been making beautiful pedal-powered machines which scream handsomeness for a few years now. This is of course also true of their touring bikes; the Tour de Fer Series (hereafter TdF). It does not only have impeccable geometry, but also comes in wicked colours. Again, cyclists, but also humans.

At first sight the TdF might look like a beefed up version of Genesis' almost legendary Croix de Fer, but it's in fact so much more than that. Touring bicycles, such as the TdF, are made not just to be resistant and allow for many bag carriers (among other things) to be installed, but are also designed to be comfortable since we tend to spend much more time than the average cyclist on them. Some manufacturers sacrifice performance in order to offer a very comfortable ride but Genesis seems to have found the perfect balance. We have been on our TdF 20 for a year now and not once did we have posture related soreness in limbs, joints or muscles.

In a way that's hard to describe, one way of knowing that this touring bike does exactly what it says on the tin is the fact that it actually feels better when fully loaded than when riding naked finding the latter a bit nervous around the corners and running out of gears a bit too quickly.

Ok. It rides well and it looks swell. I suppose these are personal traits which we could argue over for hours so, let's have a look at some specs;

To start with, the frame is constructed using heat-treated Reynolds 725 steel tubing (about as good as it gets for bicycle touring) which is made to go around the world. Steel is easy soldered anywhere on this planet and provides attributes such as durability and vibration absorption – both ideal attributes when considering a new travel machine. Apart from these, and as far as steel frames go, the stronger structure of the material also allows for smaller tubes which further results to lighter bikes.

Secondly, this bike boasts some pretty good wheels; Sun Ringle Rhyno Lite 36 holes rims are, again, pretty much ideal for a touring bike giving some extra resistance when fully loaded and better shock absorption. All TdFs come fitted with Schwalbe Marathon Mondial; definitely not an off-road tyre but an excellent road touring one which gave us our first puncture





after over 6000 kms. Eventually we had to change them and decided to fit a slightly more off-road model, the GT365. So far, it has impressed us both on wet tarmac/mud and on very loose gravel/sand. Still on the wheels, these come fitted with Shimano Promax mechanical disc brakes; not the best on the market but are easily maintained wherever you are and whose pads are readily available in shops everywhere we've been so far. Before we move on, the TdF 20 and 30 come fitted with a top of the range SP PD-8 dynamo which, although it has caused us some problems while on the road, is still a pretty good choice for lighting those powerful B&M Lumotec IQ-X lights (the best dynamo-powered front light I've ever had the chance to use on a bicycle) or used with a dynamo charger to power up your devices as you ride.

Another great component is of course the drive train. We firmly believe that Shimano Deore is probably one of the best choices for any bike tourer who is planning to climb up at any point. We had thought about upgrading to a TdF 30 which comes with Shimano Tiagra but, I must admit, that we were worried about our knees suffering way too much on those steep hills. Deore is also durable and easy to maintain which, again, is something that should always be on your mind when considering travelling to places far away.

The last reason why we seriously loved this bike from the very first few strokes is the handlebar. We define ourselves as mountain bikers hence we don't have too much experience with drop bars, but if you check out any blogs on the subject you will immediately see that this is probably one of the biggest debates when it comes to bike touring. Our only advice on the matter is to go with whatever you find more comfortable and, in our case, it's flat bars. The TdF 20 comes fitted with a 12



degrees back sweep handlebar which is not just comfortable, also feels very natural while riding - there is plenty of space left-over for whatever gadgets or accessories you want to stick on there. Better still, they also come with some pretty sleek looking ergonomic grips which offer two hand positions and are made with a very resistant material which is still holding up fantastically after a year under the sun, rain and all kind of temperatures.

Apart from these "must haves", the TdF 20 also comes with a pack of fun little extras, which are always nice, such as a very functional and practical spare spokes holder on the seat stay (life saver); a nice set of pedals (although we love our SPDs so immediately took them off); not one, two, but three bottle holders; back and front tubus carriers and, last but not least, the B&M lights which are just out of this world.

However, nothing is perfect. We have noticed a couple of issues which

might give the guys at Genesis something to lose some sleep over. To mention a trivial one; in size XS you'll find challenging fitting any bottles beneath the downtube. After entering many shops, we finally found one small enough in Iran!

At the top of the "serious concerns section" there's the wheel clearance; Genesis has obviously put a lot of effort into making this bike an all-rounder, but for some reason, they decided to go with a pretty slim frame design which gives anyone who is into serious off-road travelling a dead good reason to look elsewhere. Using Schwalbe as a reference, the maximum size is 35C with mudguards and 38C without. Frankly, although we haven't had the need for wider tires yet, I do dread the day when this will be an issue and, even though we are happy with the current tires, we have run into some problems while on very muddy paths in Russia. In fact, although TdFs come

fitted with some great fenders, mud is mud and with the right conditions it builds up in the rear (close to the seat tube) and stops the wheel from turning.

To finish with just a quick note about the saddle provided - it has a nice, soft feel and looks good, but it's only really suitable for commuting - it will definitely leave you cursing after only a couple of hours. Comically, in the specs, they refer to this as the Genesis Comfort!

Nonetheless, the Tour de Fer 20 is a great out-of-the-box bike which has great perks like its geometry, as well as components which are built to last. Hopefully, in the future, the wheel clearance will be improved. But, meanwhile, we love ours and definitely feel that it's still a very good buy, whether to take a quick stroll halfway across the globe or cycle twenty miles down the road to work every day.

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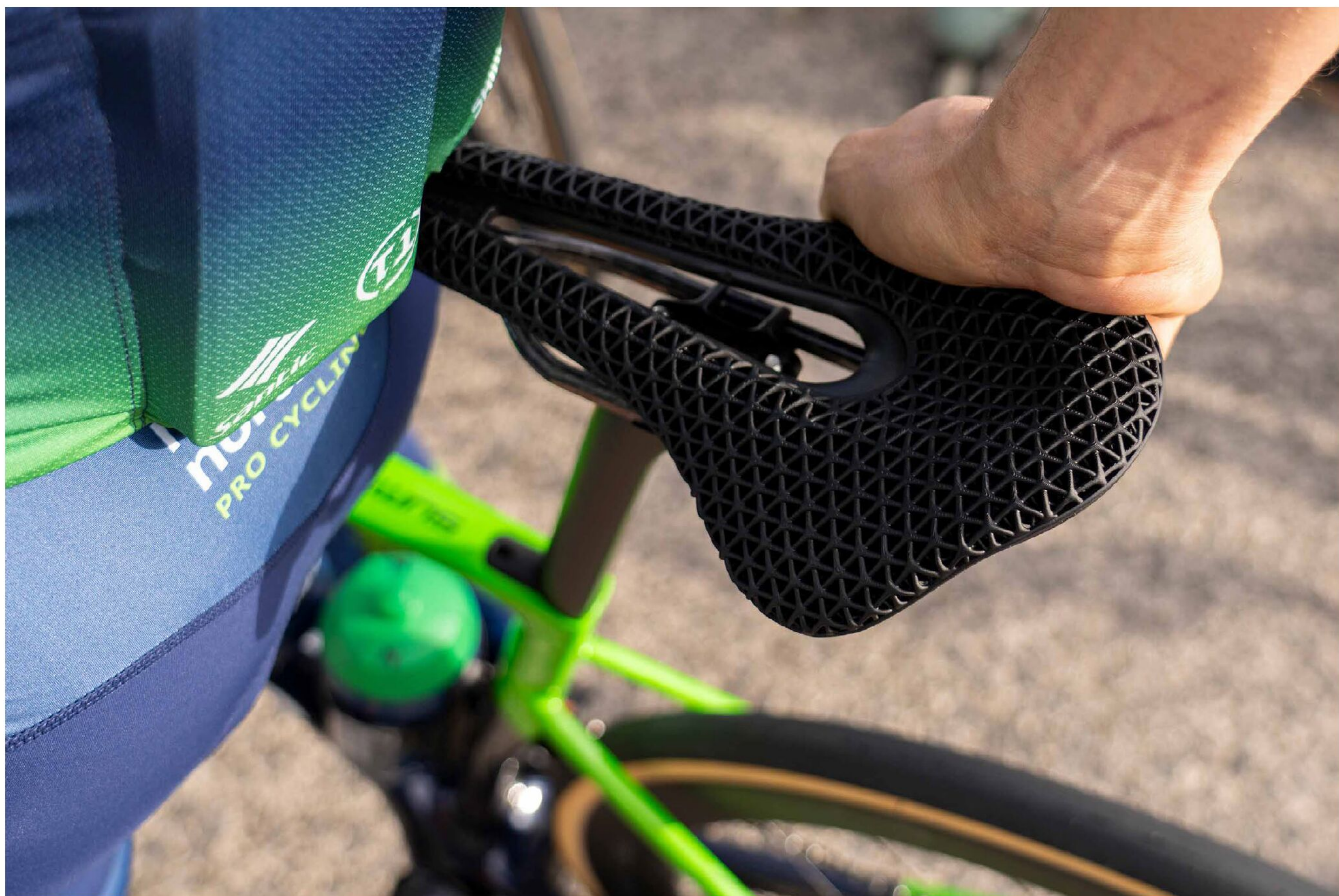
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RETURN OF SELLE SAN MARCO



Selle San Marco, the renowned Italian saddle brand, is making a significant return to professional cycling. In 2025, the company will strengthen its presence in elite road and mountain bike racing through strategic partnerships with two UCI ProTeams—Novo Nordisk and Wagner Bazin WB—as well as the KTM MTB Factory Team.

A Homecoming to Top-Tier Competition

As a brand with deep roots in competitive cycling, Selle San Marco sees this return as a natural evolution. The collaboration with professional teams underscores its commitment to performance, innovation, and rider support.

Starting in January 2025, Selle San Marco will equip Novo Nordisk and Wagner Bazin WB in premier international road races, including the most prestigious events in the

sport. Additionally, the company will provide its high-performance saddles to the KTM MTB Factory Team, reinforcing its role in off-road cycling.

"We are honored to be chosen by these teams. Supporting athletes at the highest level is essential to our philosophy. Their trust in our products is invaluable," says Riccardo Bigolin, Vice President of the Selle Italia Group, which owns Selle San Marco. "By working closely with riders, from training to competition, we continually refine our products based on their feedback."

Expanding in Road Cycling

In the road cycling arena, Selle San Marco is aligning with two dynamic ProTeams. The American squad, Novo Nordisk, is renowned for its groundbreaking efforts to empower athletes with diabetes. Wagner Bazin WB, a newly established French-Belgian team born from the merger of Bingoal WB and Philippe Wagner-Bazin in 2024, also joins the roster.

"We are excited to partner with Selle San Marco," says Vassili Davidenko, CEO of Team Novo Nordisk. "Their commitment to excellence and innovation aligns perfectly with our mission to inspire and support people living with diabetes. Our riders will benefit from world-class equipment as they continue to break barriers in the sport." Similarly, Wagner Bazin WB sees great potential

in this partnership. "We are delighted to welcome Selle San Marco on board," says Mattijs Dachy, Operations Manager. "Their expertise will allow our riders to find the perfect saddle for their needs, supporting our long-term ambitions."

Commitment to Mountain Biking

Selle San Marco is also expanding its footprint in mountain biking by joining forces with the KTM MTB Factory Team. The Austrian outfit has chosen Selle San Marco saddles to equip its top-tier riders.

Adding to its off-road portfolio, the brand continues its collaboration with Enduro rider Jordi Bago and confirms its partnerships with the Four Es International Project and Aromitalia teams.

A Legacy of Excellence

Founded in 1935 in Rossano Veneto, Italy, Selle San Marco has built a storied reputation in professional cycling. With a legacy of craftsmanship and performance, the brand remains a benchmark for high-quality, Italian-made cycling products. Since 2016, it has been part of the Selle Italia Group, continuing to uphold its tradition of innovation and elegance.



GRANADA SPAIN



Growing up reading about the history of the Mediterranean and thanks to my love of Flamenco music, a visit to Spain has always been at the back of my mind.

After our trip to Japan last year, we were longing to venture back into the open roads, and the remaining question was about where to go.

After plenty of research and Nadiah's mental prodding for me to go explore Europe, the idea of Spain came into the picture almost immediately! Not only will I get to visit the birthplace of Flamenco, but the idea of immersing ourselves in the

culturally and historically rich setting of Andalucía while on a cycling tour piqued the senses.

When we arrived, we made friends with the wonderful folks at Cycling Country (special thanks to Geoff and Maggi who are awesome) who provided an excellent itinerary for us to explore the pueblo blancos of Al-Andalus – The White Villages of Andalucía.

Our journey began in Granada, nestled at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountains and home to the Alhambra, the crown jewel of Spanish Andalucía antiquity. We explored the many beautiful views of old Granada from the Albaycin, and even had a little adventure into the Sierra Nevada.

The actual cycling tour was not lengthy in terms of days, but the amount of elevation we experienced was enough to give us an appreciation of the beautiful countryside. For this trip, I opted to go with the Change Bike with 700c wheels to cover the distances faster, which also helped when overcoming long climbs..

The first stage of our journey began at the doorstep of Hotel Los Angeles in Granada, where we woke up to blue skies and a healthy dose of sunshine to keep us warm back in November.

Granada to Alhama

Distance 58km

Climbing 930m

Grade Medium/Hard

Dean, from Cycling County, greeted us at our hotel and made sure that we had all the information we needed to start our self guided tour. We had maps and cue sheets ready, and after a quick pressure check of our tyres, we were ready to jump on the saddle!

Out from the hotel, we made our way westwards, weaving between the smaller urban roads and footpaths until we found ourselves at the urban border of Granada. From there, we followed the bike path that runs alongside the Rio Genil as we rode out of the southern region in sunny Spain.

At the end of the bike path, we continued onwards to small country roads, traveling through the many small agricultural villages that make up the landscape of the Genil Valley. We passed through the small village of Vegas de Genil and stopped there for a late lunch right before the Spanish siesta.





After an extremely pleasant lunch of calamari and pollo, we continued our travels along the quiet roads and admired the lush farmlands around us – olives, wheat and corn. There were plenty of rolling hills that gave us quite a workout as we continued with several slow and steady climbs.

We cycled past the villages of La Malaha and Escuzar and bid farewell to the Sierra Nevada mountains behind us. From this point onwards, the roads and landscape started getting more hilly and we found ourselves slowly transitioning to our climbing gears and keeping them there.

We traveled through many more small farming villages, and after riding through Ventas de Huelma, we continued again into the open countryside – and even more hills! The downhill parts were extremely enjoyable as we soaked in the scenery and the breeze and, of course, this gave our legs a break before we mentally prepared ourselves for the next climb.

We managed to catch the final rays of sunlight from the fading golden hour and tried our best to keep our pace while continuing onwards through many more hill climbs. With every view by every minute on the saddle, an Instagram cyclist could pretty much hashtag [#roadslikethese](#) and [#lightbro](#) for everything.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, the temperature started to drop rapidly and my fingerless cycling gloves didn't cut it anymore. We arrived at the shores of Lake Bermajales right at the start of nightfall and stopped to enjoy the view (and our freezing hands with Merino wool liners!). From the lake, we were able to see the beautiful coastal mountains – the Sierra de Almiñara, Tejeda and Alhama.

The bridge going through the Embalse de Los Bermejales would be the last temporary bit of flat riding that we'd experience for the evening. As we approached the end of the bridge and out of the lake, the sunlight had disappeared completely as darkness fell.

The only lights we had were the ones on our bikes, and a tiny bit of moonlight illuminating the landscape around us. When we first continued into the farmland areas and left the lake behind us, it was nice and quiet. We thought it would be a very peaceful ride. Unfortunately, that tranquility did not last for long.

The climbs became steeper as we moved away from the lake. The coastal mountain range that we saw earlier from the shores of the lake should have served as a strong hint. Both mental and physical fatigue started to creep in, and I believe it was that combination that more or less gave our presence away to the many shepherd guard dogs patrolling the empty farmlands.

We were easy prey. Two tired cyclists all alone in the dark - Nadiah was already frightened and mentally fatigued, so she pretty much had a bullseye painted all over. I had to put in effort for bravado right when one of the bigger shepherd dogs came at me from behind and I had to exert a bit of the alpha status to keep them at bay. All this while climbing through MANY rolling hills. The dogs continued to track and hunt while we continued to cycle as fast as we could through the hilly farmlands. Whenever we stopped to try to make an emergency phone call, we couldn't get signal, further hearing the tracker dogs catch up from behind us. Adrenaline was pretty much the only thing that kept us moving!

Right when we thought our legs couldn't keep going any longer, we felt the gradient of the road slope downwards and we were thankfully gaining speed! At last, we made it through the edge of the hills and enjoyed our victorious swooping descent. We could see the lights of Alhama up ahead – civilization at last!

When we finally reached the base of the hill, we stopped nearby the old Roman bridge which served as the welcoming entrance into Alhama de Granada and, of course, there was a hill climb on the other side into the village. At this point, Nadiah was exhausted beyond belief and we opted to ring up Cycling





Country. Geoff came to the rescue and ferried us for the last 1 kilometer of the evening up into our lovely accommodation.

We enjoyed a beautiful evening at La Seguiriya; a rustic and charming place with wonderful food and people.

We opened our eyes the next morning and wished we could enjoy La Seguiriya for a bit longer, but the journey ahead of us beckoned and wanted to make sure we finished before nightfall after last night's lesson. We had the terrace overlooking the valley below all to ourselves for the morning before we once again embarked on our tour.

We stopped by Cycling Country's shop around the corner from La Seguiriya and met both Geoff and Maggi there. We had a good debrief session about the previous day's ride, and based on the distances and climbs that we'd be doing for the next few days, we all thought it'd be easier if Nadiah switched to 700c wheels. All the routes that we'd be doing are ideal for road cyclists with 700c wheels, but it would be a bit of a struggle for those riding 20-inch wheels to keep up.

I was doing quite well so far with my Change folding bike with 25mm tyres rolling on 700c wheels. At the shop, there just happened to be a beautiful Orbea carbon road bike that was the perfect size for Nadiah, so she opted to go with that steed for the remainder of our tour. From there, we get a short lift from Geoff in the Cycling Country van to skip past the initial steep hill climb out of the village. We then bid our farewells and began the second stage of our journey.

We had a blast riding down the winding descents of the Sierra de Alhama and arrived at the fertile plains of Zafarraya below. The Zafarraya plains are home to three villages, with the one we cycled through being Ventas de Zafarraya. The Spanish "Ventas" refers to the small inns in the area. Back in the old days, this small village was where traders would often stay and refreshed themselves and their caravan before continuing on their journey.



Beautiful limestone rock formations adorn the landscape surrounding the small village, and we felt a little bit like Frodo and Samwise from Lord of the Rings passing through a hidden passage amidst such epic and majestic mountains.

At the edge of the village lies the Boquete rock formation, which is the first and last known place for European Neanderthal to have lived. In 1979, this area was recognised as the Cueva del Boquete de Zafarraya, home to the best preserved remains of a 30,000 year old Neanderthal found in Western Europe.

The natural break through this coastal range served as an important trade route during the Moorish Nasrid era in the 10th century where caravans were able to travel back and forth between North Africa and the Iberian peninsula. In fact, on a really clear day, it is possible to see the coastline of Northern Africa and the Straits of Gibraltar from this side of the mountain.

In more recent history, this area was a strategic point where the Republicans fought the Nationalists for control during the Spanish Civil War in 1936. The coastline of Malaga was bombarded by Franco's troops and thousands were massacred along this coastal route from aerial and mortar attacks. In 1937, the exodus of Malaga saw 150,000 civilians escape to the east to Almeria.

From Zafarraya, we head southwards into the Axarquía and ride through the natural parks of the Malaga mountains. These mountains have also been witness to many battles and relentless bloodshed between the Muslim and Christian empires as both sides fought for control of Malaga in the 15th century. As the Christian monarchs won the final battles, the scales tipped in their favour and the Muslim armies were conquered, resulting in the fall of Granada in 1492.





Nonetheless, the days days of battle and bloodshed have been long gone, and it is now a very tranquil region of farmlands and natural parks. Thankfully, today's route was mostly downhill as we spent the majority of yesterday climbing. We enjoyed the fast and panoramic descents through the Axarquía and make a pitstop in the small village of Periana for lunch before continuing onwards through fields of wheat and barley before approaching the village of Rio Gordo.

We enjoyed the tranquility of Rio Gordo as we cycled past the quaint pueblo blancos and witnessed a big herd of goats and sheep making their way through the small canal in the village. The residents of Rio Gordo enjoy the slow and plentiful life to the fullest extent, with an official "Snail Day" celebration dedicated to this lifestyle.

As we kept going, we certainly felt like snails when climbing out of the valley from Rio Gordo. At this point, we've completed all the

downhill parts of our journey and it is time to start our ascent again into the mountains. After climbing out of the valley through Rio Gordo, we at last make our way to our final destination of the day – Colmenar.

Nestled within the surrounding mountain ranges that can be seen in the distance, Colmenar is known to the locals as the capital of the mountains! Colmenar is a small agricultural town that is also home to numerous beehives, its name derived from the word colmena which means beehive in Spanish. We made our final ascent and settled in a small family-run inn at the edge of town for the evening. Luckily, this time, we managed to make it just before sunset!

Although we spent most of the day riding down beautiful descents, the final part of the day was spent climbing back up hills and mountains. As for the next stage heading towards Antequera, this would be one of the most challenging rides to date.



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THE BLOODWISE



Multi-day cycling events are becoming increasingly popular amongst leisure riders.

4 days
500 kilometres
250 riders
1 goal

The pros have Le Grand Boucle, not to mention the tours of Spain and Italy, to satisfy their need to don lycra every morning and cycle ludicrous distances for weeks on end.

For amateurs like my wife Jacqueline and I, the nearest thing to riding like a pro for a number of days can be found in one of the many London to Paris challenges now available.

The Bloodwise blood cancer charity's bike trip, is reputedly one of the best. Ride captain Tom Morton singles this event out as "not just another long distance ride." It is he says, "... special in so many ways. There are over 140 London to Paris rides every year, only a few, four or five, are in the top league."

The Bloodwise ride mimics a pro event in many aspects. It has a 'broom' wagon (albeit a hop-on, hop off version!); motor-cycle outriders; medics; rolling road closures on the French side, all the way to the Eiffel Tower; mechanics offering instant roadside wheel changes; an army of physios to untangle stiff, twisted muscles; a TV crew careering around the peloton on motorbikes; a road book for every rider, and even a crowd of raucous supporters (friends and family) at the Arc de Triomphe.

And just like some professionals of not so long ago - if not currently (but who honestly knows?) - this ride is all about the drugs! Unlike those secretive pros, it's a fact the organisers are not ashamed to flaunt. That's because the substances in question are neither testosterone nor EPO. Instead, the drug therapies Bloodwise are there to better understand, treat and beat all 137 different types of blood cancer as part of their research.

While getting to Paris under your own steam is inspirational enough, doing so in aid of such a cause, in the company of an extraordinary group of fellow cyclists, elevates this endeavour to a wholly different plane. It is truly special as Tom Morton asserts and for most, deeply emotionally. In the end, what leaves the biggest lasting impression are not the miles covered, but the people in whose company are covered.



**DAY ONE****GREENWICH TO CALAIS**

126.9km - 1,164m

The adventure starts in London's Greenwich Park early on a Thursday morning. 250 jittery riders, including my wife and I, prepare our bikes, attach numbers, fiddle with timing chips, make last-minute kit choices and gulp down a final strong coffee. After a farewell talk from Cathy Gilman, Bloodwise Chief Executive, we all ride off en masse, heading for Folkestone some 126km away. At first, getting out of London feels a little like we're commuting to work in rush hour. While there are no rolling road closures on this first UK leg, the moto riders still help us along.

Once in the Kent countryside the vibe changes. Approaching Lympne Hill, the surroundings are positively bucolic. But the serene inner calm induced by the gentle scenery comes before a storm all of its own. There are soon the leg-crunching ramps of 'The Hill' to contend with. Less than a kilometre of climbing may seem paltry but you gain 94m in that

distance, with Lypne Hill, according to Veloviewer, having a maximum grade of 24% alone.

It's a timed hill climb, recorded by DB Max, so us riders are at liberty to put our heads down and compete— with most heads being down by the summit as riders gasp painfully for breath. By the summit as riders gasp painfully for breath. Thankfully, the remaining run into the bus park is flat and short. We queue to load our bikes onto the lorries which will transport them through the Channel Tunnel before we hop onto the coaches and follow their path.

DAY TWO

CALAIS TO ABBEVILLE

136.7km – 1,179m

Day two is the longest and hilliest portion of the ride and will soon turn out to be the soggiest. We are now split into our speed groups - fast, medium and social (never 'slow'). Rolling out of Calais you immediately feel the benefit of being on an effectively closed road event. We are cruising along inside a motorist-free pocket created by the lead car, the van at the rear and the moto riders constantly buzzing ahead to block off road junctions.

Early on, I suffer a pinch flat in my back tyre and have to stop. Luckily, mechanics are there in a flash. Ride captain Tom Morton whips off my rear wheel. I'm given a spare and deposited back in the group. Just like the Tour, apart from the short, cheeky, lift in the van. If only getting punctures on the commute to work could be resolved like this.

My own wheel has my number stuck to it and the service wheel has a distinctive yellow-striped tyre, making it easy for the mechanics eventually to reunite repaired wheels with their owners. It's a system which will be tested to the limit later in the day when the heavens open and the puncture count starts rocketing.



After a lunchtime baguette we are cycling along in double file when the rain hits. Quick as a flash, my riding companion observes that this two abreast, or “two by two” configuration, as he expresses it, is very apt given the Biblical nature of the downpour which has started.

The deluge keeps up all afternoon leaving those of us wearing waterproof socks to curse our choice. They are so effectively waterproof that the rain, which has run down our legs, past our overshoes and INSIDE the socks, does not drain out. We pedal along with our feet in ‘bags’ of cold water, where they slosh around like goldfish won at a fairground.

Neither the rain, nor the unrelenting headwind, does anything to dampen our spirits. In fact, some relish the wet conditions seeing them as merely another challenge to be tackled and overcome. To the many pedallers in the group who have lived through, or are living with, extreme blood conditions, a September shower is nothing. Eighteen-year-old rider Joe Smale, for instance, was diagnosed with leukaemia for the third time just four years ago – then had a bone marrow transplant. Steve Mitchell, doing the ride for the second time, is preparing to meet the donor who saved his life once he reaches Paris.

For Anil Pindoria the rain is a minor consideration. He joined the group at Greenwich after having already just ridden there from Paris. He covered the reverse of our journey unsupported, carrying his own luggage. He suffered one puncture and rode our days three and four in one go.

We are nevertheless happy to reach Abbeville and squelch to our hotels. The day’s elevation in our road books looks like the angry, jagged, teeth of a rusty old saw. Everyone is tired. Even the hard-as-nails ride captains admit to feeling ravenous after their exertions.

DAY THREE

ABBEVILLE TO BEAUVAIS

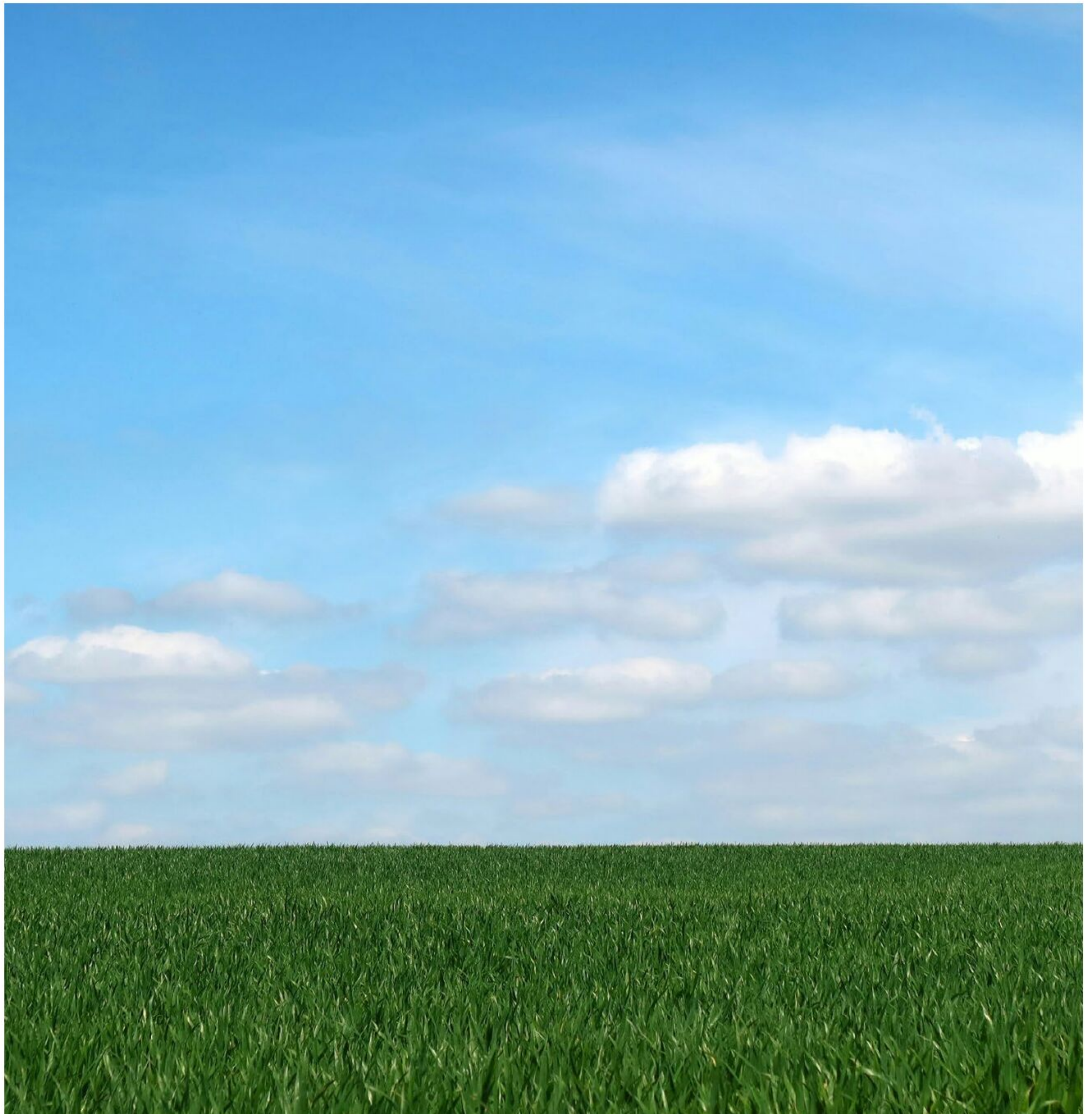
115.3KM – 786m

No rain, fewer hills, shorter distance. Day three offers the first real chance to take in the French countryside and relax – as far as that is possible. We pass sleepy villages, gently rolling fields, the odd war cemetery and hear, rather than necessarily see, a succession of agitated dogs who bark lustily from behind garden fences as they sense our alien presence from the massed swishing of tyres.

When we do encounter people, they are unstintingly encouraging. 'Allez!' yells a man caught short outside his front door in nothing but a dressing gown. An elderly lady clasping fresh baguettes under her arm nods approvingly as we whizz along. Most people wave and offer a cheery 'Salut' or 'Bonjour'. Children invariably wave, while some extend a hand in expectation of a high-five.

Riding in a group, there's ample opportunity to strike up conversations. Pro riders spotted whispering to each other are normally cobbling together some – possibly nefarious – tactical deal which could influence the outcome of their race. Bloodwise riders chewing the cud as they pedal, are doing just that – chatting. It may be impossible for the committed speedsters in the fast group to indulge in idle chit chat, but the social group was not given its name lightly.

I ride for a while with one cyclist who asks how I've been sleeping. I mention that an attack of cramp woke me in the middle of the night. No sooner said, he reaches behind to his jersey pocket and produces a slender metal cylinder. "Try that as soon as you feel it starting," he says. Ridiculous as it may sound, I quickly feel like a secret doper. I palm the tube and stuff it in my own back pocket. Apparently, Liquid Magnesium is the way forward when it comes to dealing with cramp. I thank him but protest, "Surely you need this for yourself, don't you?" But he shakes his head as we freewheel past scenes of rustic charm, "I have eight more of those," he tells me. Dubious substance passed from one cyclist to the other? Again, we're just like the pros (or the ones who cheat, at least).





While we have motorcycle outriders smoothing our way, the French drivers we do encounter are refreshingly accommodating. Many salute us cheerily even although they've been held up at a junction for long minutes while our charity peloton trickles through. All of which adds up to an incredibly positive cycling experience.

The other very special thing about the ride into Beauvais is the warm reception we receive from the town. Our bike storage area for the night is the local fire station. We are greeted amongst the fire engines and utilitarian concrete buildings by an official delegation. There are even waiters in ties proffering glasses of wine and orange juice.

There's a heartfelt speech by one of the deputy mayors, Francois Bramard, welcoming us and praising the important work Bloodwise does in tackling blood cancer. Madame Bramard gamely translates her own speech into English while Mark Wilson, from Bloodwise, has his address translated by colleague Dan Henschman. Proceedings are rounded off with the presentation to the deputy mayor of a Bloodwise London to Paris medal.

DAY FOUR

BEAUVAIS TO PARIS

102km – 948m

This is the big day. The relatively short ride into the French capital where many of us have friends and family waiting to cheer us across the finish line.

It starts with a series of hills. None is too challenging but Tom Morton and the other ride captains are kept busy planting "the hand of God" on the small of struggling cyclists' backs and pushing them up the inclines. Tom explains that those who stop pedalling completely at this point quickly receive some, "polite constructive feedback" from him. He says propelling another cyclist upwards may be hard, but he also gets





a “buzz out of overtaking other riders whilst pushing someone up a hill.” Plus, it means there’s never a shortage of people willing to buy him a drink in the evenings.

Top level, amateur competitive cyclist, Nic Baxter, is able to perform this task with both hands. Tapping out a rhythm just behind him, I watch as he deftly propels a gasping rider up using his left hand. In one movement Nic lets go of rider number one, switches grip on his handlebars, and starts supporting flagging rider number two with his right hand. “Chapeau”, doesn’t really cover it.

Nic and Torq Fitness founder, Matt Hart, also put in long shifts wielding a long stick as they pedal which they use to help the phenomenal handbike athlete, former Paralympian and leukemia survivor, Dr. William Tan, make it over some of the bumps. The camaraderie between these three is infectious and aptly symbolises the spirit of the entire ride.

Speed groups are dropped after lunch and we ride into Paris as one massive peloton. Timing the traffic-free passage of so many riders past the Arc de Triomphe and across the Seine under the curious collective gaze of the tourists on top of the Eiffel Tower is quite an art.

Our pace therefore is dictated to us by the moto riders who have a very limited window to work with. This may make for something of ‘slow, stop, slow,’ kind of ride, but clattering over the Parisian cobbles is exhilarating and smiles spread across faces as we start recognising parts of the French capital. It ends in a flash when we turn off the main road and into a sports centre to cross the official finish line, right next to the Eiffel Tower.

Beer is thrust into our hands immediately and we’re given our medals by roaming members of the Bloodwise crew in a charmingly informal manner. There are tears and

reunions. Almost everyone vows to do it all again “next year”. It’s the best cycling event I’ve been part of. And it’s an occasion when drugs, in the sense of those used to fight blood cancer, go together with cycling perfectly. Not something to hide, but to be immensely proud of.

About Bloodwise:

Up until it’s rebranding earlier this year Bloodwise was known as Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research. The riders on their London to Paris event raised £600,000 for the charity. Bloodwise’s research is targeted at understanding more about blood cancer, finding causes, improving diagnosis and running groundbreaking clinical trials to improve access to new drug treatments for all patients.

For more go to <https://bloodwise.org.uk>

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THE PERFECT BIKE FIT



In the world of cycling, achieving the perfect bike fit is essential for maximizing performance, comfort, and preventing injuries. Enter idmatch, a cutting-edge bike fitting system that has set a new standard in the industry with its scientific approach and advanced technology.

Since its inception in 2010 and the introduction of the Bike Lab in 2016, idmatch has become a benchmark for

bike fitting. The system utilizes a 3D camera to scan cyclists, eliminating the subjectivity often associated with traditional fitting methods. This innovative approach has led to the establishment of 260 Bike Labs worldwide, with a global database of 85,000 cyclists and approximately 1,500 bike fittings conducted monthly.

Key Features of idmatch:

- **Markerless Technology:** By using a 3D camera, idmatch eliminates the need for markers, relying instead on motion rules to analyze cycling posture and dynamics.
- **User-Friendly:** The system is designed to be easy to use, requiring specific training for bike fitters.

- Speed: With an average analysis time of 47 minutes, idmatch offers rapid and accurate results.

The idmatch system includes tools that align each athlete's body type with their equipment characteristics, providing a personalized approach to bike positioning and accessory selection. This comprehensive system is ideal for retailers or bike fitting centers aiming to offer reliable bike fitting services.

idmatch Services:

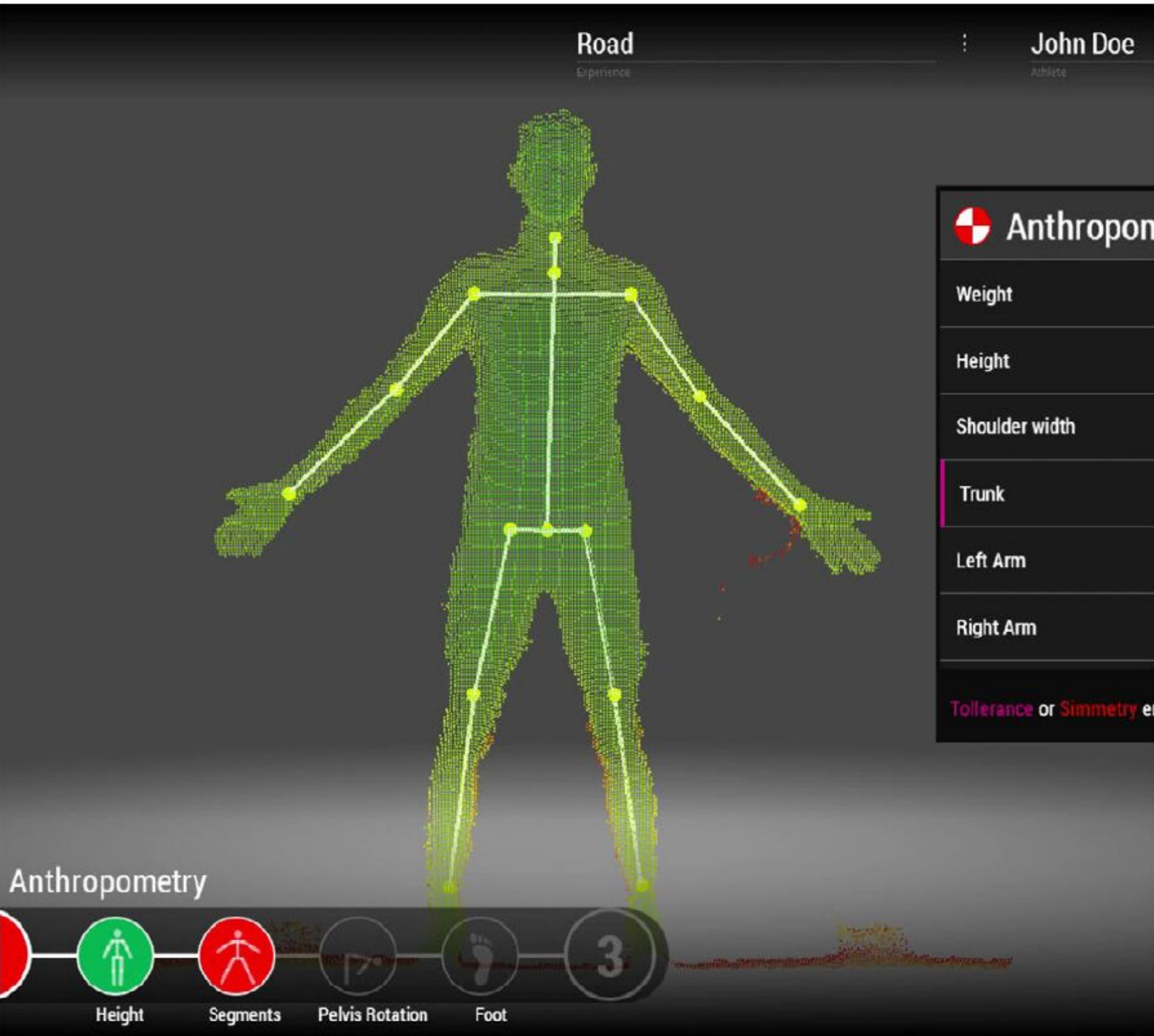
- Bike Lab: Comprehensive bike fitting services.
- Foot Fitting: Determines the correct bike size, saddle position, cleat positioning, and ideal handlebars and saddle.
- Saddle Fitting: Ensures the correct saddle position.

The system's 3D scanning and data analysis capabilities allow for precise detection of joint connection points, reducing errors and time required for data acquisition. The data is stored in a

cloud database, constantly updated with information from Bike Labs worldwide.

The fitting process with idmatch consists of five steps: entering personal data, 3D detection of joints, foot fitting, analysis of accessories, and positioning in the saddle. After the fitting process, the system suggests compatible frame, saddle, and components from a catalog of over 200 bike brands and 10,000 models.

For more information visit www.idmatch.cc.



MONTBLANC

The World's Toughest One Day Bike Event

It's quarter to five in the morning and a veil of darkness hangs over Les Saisies. A feeling of nervous excitement fills the night sky as the 422 entrants for the Tour du Mont Blanc count down the final minutes until the start of 'the world's toughest one day bike event'

I wait patiently, with a calm exterior hiding my true feelings of fear and anxiety. The excitement I had experienced in the final few days leading up to the event had been dispelled the night before at the Velocamp Performance Cycling pre-ride briefing. I always knew it was going to be tough: 330km with 8000m of ascent on a route that makes its way through three countries speaks for itself, but hearing detailed

descriptions of each of the eight climbs brought a sense of worry. And now, with moments to go until the start, I struggled to contain those feelings.

'Cinq, quatre, trois, deux, un, balade'. As the MC counted down those final five seconds my feelings shifted from nervousness and fear into excitement and adrenalin. Suddenly, the tension I had felt for the past twelve hours melted away as I clipped my shoes into the pedals of my bike and rolled across the start line. There was no more waiting, no more time to wonder 'what if', just an open road ahead and one question to answer, a question that has been going through my head for days on end: 'can I do it?'

Given I had only been cycling seriously for six months, this was a very valid question. It's a question that has been a part of my life for many years', it's the question that drives me to find challenges that will push me to, and past, my limits. The next eighteen hours of cycling, if I kept to my planned timings, would certainly push me to my limits – giving me the definitive answer.

For a ride that boasts 8000m of ascent, the opening stages are deceptively easy, lulling you into a false sense of security with 40 kilometres of predominately downhill riding. I soon realised that the reason for this is so that the ride can then end with one final climb. However, any thoughts of that were a long way off, with three hors category and three first category climbs to negotiate first; more than enough to keep my mind occupied for the foreseeable future.

As a long snake of riders stretched out across the Chamonix valley, Mont Blanc came into view for the first time, dominating an impressive skyline of jagged peaks with its sheer size. It would remain the backdrop to much of the day's riding, a constant reminder of the scale of the landscape we were in. Climbs of the Vaudagne, Col des Montets and Col des Forclaz would, in normal circumstances, be deemed fairly challenging. Yet these were not normal circumstances and they were simply the prelude to far greater climbs.

It was on the slopes of the Champex, against a backdrop of incessant rain, that the serious climbing began. A touch over 12km long, and gaining over 1000m in height, it's a brute of a climb that winds its way up through thick forest towards a beautiful alpine lake. What the climb lacks in length is far more than what makes up for its steepness, with several sections rearing up to 11% gradient. My sole focus was keeping a steady rhythm going, knowing that this was only the first of several big climbs.

The Champex was tough, but it was nothing compared to the Grand St Bernard, a climb that most certainly lives up to its name. From the moment the road begins to increase in gradient at the foot of the valley, climb doesn't relent for a full thirty





kilometres. And what's more, just as you think you have broken the back of it, emerging from the avalanche tunnel with seven kilometres to go, it ramps up to 9% as the final seven kilometres push you to the limit. I stole a glance towards the summit, high up in the distance, trying to work out where the road went. It soon became clear as I noticed a series of vicious switchbacks that picked their way through the rocky mountain.

Ever since I first saw the Tour de France as a young boy, I had wanted to know what it was like to take on such epic climbs. Now here, I was finally getting my chance. Riding out of the saddle I simply focused on making each corner, breaking the goal down into smaller sections, focusing on every turn of the pedals as I edged my way closer to the summit. A massive sense of relief washed over me as I crested the top of the climb, soon to be replaced by the sobering thought that I was not even half way, in terms of distance or ascent. I consoled myself with the thought of the forty kilometres of descent that lay ahead, but not before a much needed refuel of sandwiches and brioche buns.

Following an exhilarating descent came a long, hot slog through the Aosta valley, all the while knowing that another hors category climb lay in wait. This time it was the Petit St Bernard, which was anything but petit. At the final feed station, before taking on the climb, I made a few quick calculations and realised I would have to up my speed in order to make it down to Bourg St Maurice before the final cut-off time.

Taking on a 23km hors category climb at a steady pace is tough enough, especially off the back of Grand St Bernard. But, to do so, pushing to make up time makes it brutal to say the least. I hit the bottom of the climb as fast as I could, knowing that a support car was waiting 10km up the road. It was all or nothing from now on. The road snaked up the mountain in a seemingly never-ending series of short switchbacks. A lone rider in the distance became my



target as I fought to maintain a speed of 15km/h.

I began to play a game in my head to take my mind off the pain in my legs, counting down the metres until I would reach La Thuile and a moment's respite before pushing on to the summit. This was it, it was all down to making it over this climb. I was in the zone and knew I had to keep my assault on the mountain going. The difference being that the gradient was now beginning to increase even more as the road cut high up into the mountain.

The next thirteen kilometres were sheer hell. My legs burnt as the lactic acid started to sting my muscles, with my body screaming at me to slow down. But my mind took over, urging me to keep going and not relent, while my heart pounding in my chest. I kept thinking every corner would be the last, but the road kept on going, pushing me closer and closer to my limit. I cursed the

mountain, and in return it kept getting steeper. I was at my limit, close to quitting when I finally saw the summit and the support cars waiting for me. As exhausted as I felt, I knew there were two more big climbs to go before the finish line, the first of which was a third consecutive hors category effort. For the first time since setting off from Les Saisies, my mind began to question if my body could follow where it would lead.

Arriving in Bourg St Maurice, my body was at its limit, and my eyes welled with tears at the thought that I might not have the energy to keep going. I had poured my heart and soul into this and, for the first time since setting out on this journey, it dawned on me that it might not finish how I had always pictured. I slumped into a chair, scoffing biscuits and chocolate, desperately trying to boost my energy levels as an almighty thunderstorm broke out,

lightening flashing across the skyline. Truth be told I felt utterly spent, but I had come too far to not keep going. I climbed back on to my bike, my mind defying what my body felt, and set off once more.

The road leading out of Bourg St Maurice and onto the Cormet de Roselend wasn't that steep, but within a hundred metres I knew that it was over - my legs simply couldn't turn the pedals anymore. I turned around and rolled back to where the support cars were, tears rolling down my face as it began to hit me that wasn't going to achieve my goal. Not this time anyway. Whilst I never took it for granted that I would finish, I also didn't for one minute imagine it would end as it did, on the side of a nondescript road in Bourg St Maurice with a thunder storm raging overhead.

'Marcus rode the Tour du Mont Blanc with Velocamp Performance Touring.'



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GRINDURO SCOTLAND 2025

10th Anniversary Celebration Marks a UK Comeback

After first making waves in California in 2015, Grinduro set a new standard for gravel events, blending racing with a festival atmosphere. Now, as part of its milestone 10th anniversary, the renowned 'purple party' is making a highly anticipated return to Scotland, one of its first international locations.

Thanks to support from global sponsors Shimano, Schwalbe, Muc-Off, Knog, Wahoo Fitness, and Leatt, Grinduro Scotland will be the second stop on the 2025 series, following Italy. The tour will then continue to Quincy, California—its birthplace—before concluding with events in Japan and South Africa.



A Scottish Favorite Returns

Scotland has long been a cherished destination for Grinduro riders and sponsors. The event was held on the Isle of Arran, known as 'Scotland in Miniature.' However, after outgrowing the island, Grinduro took a brief hiatus from the UK gravel scene following its final Wales event in 2023. Now, Northern Consultancy Co., the event's owners, have carefully selected a new venue that

embodies Grinduro's unique 'Perfect Party-to-Race Ratio.'

"Grinduro has always been about more than just racing—it's a destination event that celebrates the character of each location," says James Deane of Grinduro Global. "We deliberately choose 'out-there' places that encourage riders to extend their trips and fully experience the region."

A New Home in Kingussie

For 2025, Grinduro Scotland will take place in Kingussie, a picturesque Highland town whose Gaelic name means 'head of the pine forest.' Riders will embark on a thrilling 100km mixed-terrain course winding through the Highlands, featuring everything from smooth asphalt and gravel roads to mountain bike singletrack and dirt trails.

Staying true to Grinduro's



signature format, competitors won't be racing from start to finish. Instead, the event will feature four timed 'enduro-style' stages, allowing participants to ride at a relaxed 'party pace' during the transition sections.

Of course, Grinduro isn't just about the race—it's a full weekend experience packed with great food, live music, and a vibrant cycling expo. Attendees can expect a fusion of bike culture and Highland tradition,

with an atmosphere that James Deane describes as "what would happen if a bike show and the Highland Games accidentally double-booked the same venue."

Entries for Grinduro Scotland open on February 14, alongside the Japan and South Africa events. Registration for Grinduro Italy is already live, while sign-ups for Grinduro California begin on March 26.

For more details, visit www.grinduro.com

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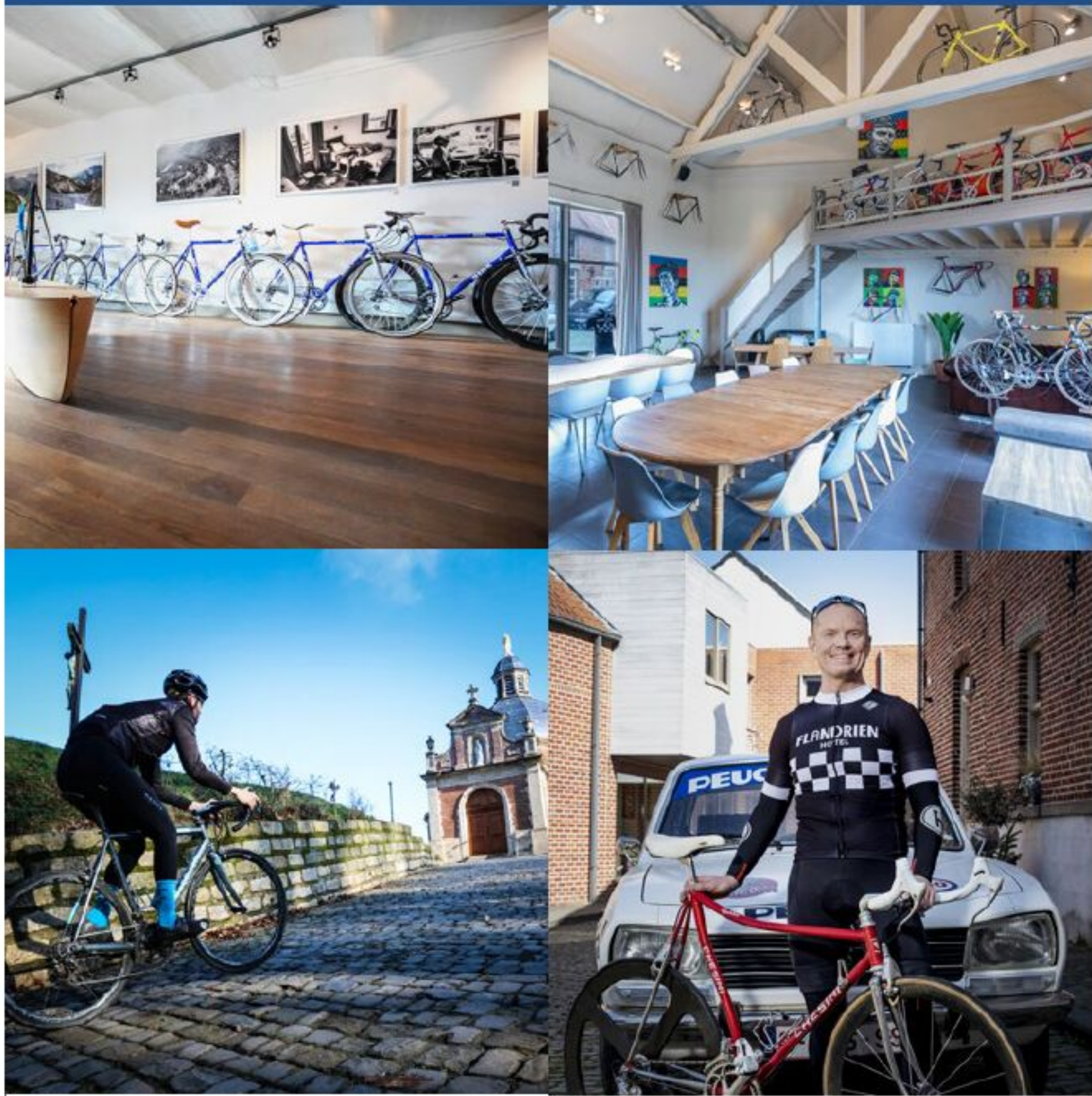


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